

4.10 CULTURAL RESOURCES

4.10.1 SETTING

PALEONTOLOGY

Placer County and much of the Sierra Nevada Foothills are emerging as an important area for paleontological resources or prehistoric fossilized remains (Placer County, 1997). Within the Sunset Industrial Area, the greatest potential for such resources to be found exists in the geologic formations known as the Modesto Formation and the Riverbank Formation, and to a lesser extent the Turlock Lake Formation and Mehrten Formation. Based on the geologic study (see Section 4.6), the project site is located within the Riverbank and Turlock Lake geologic formations.

PREHISTORIC CONTEXT

One of the earliest clearly dated contexts for human occupation in north central California is from site CA-SHA-475 located north of Redding on Squaw Creek, where a charcoal based C-14 date suggests initial Native American presence within this area around 6,500 years ago. Continuous use of the region is indicated on the basis of evidence from this and other regional sites, particularly within the Farmington area southeast of the project area, and along the Truckee River drainage northeast of Nevada City. Most of the artifactual material dating to this early time period suggests cultural affiliation with the Borax Lake area; the presence of large wide-stemmed projectile points and manos and metates being the most prominent and distinctive artifact types represented. The possibility exists that this early culture represents Hokan-speaking peoples who were also ancestral to those who subsequently expanded into the southern Cascade, the southern Klamath, the northern Coast Range areas, and the lower reaches of the Sierra Nevada mountains east and northeast of Sacramento.

Sometime around AD 200-400, the first major disruption of this early California culture is believed to have occurred. Arriving ultimately from southern Oregon and the Columbia and Modoc Plateau region and proceeding down the major drainage systems (including the Feather, Yuba, and American rivers), Penutian-speaking peoples arrived in the area and proceeded as far west as the Sacramento Valley floor and the margins of the Sacramento River by the time of contact with Euroamerican populations (circa AD 1850). Presumably introduced by these later arrivals were more extensive use of bulbs and other plant foods, animal and fishing products more intensively processed with mortars and pestles, and perhaps the bow and arrow and associated small stemmed- and corner-notched projectile points. In the northernmost Sacramento Valley, the so-called Shasta (archaeological) Complex represents the material culture record of the local Penutian speakers. Similar archaeological expressions also define the Penutian-speaking occupants of the northern Sierra Nevada around Grass Valley and Nevada City, and the Nisenan ancestors in the foothills east and northeast of Sacramento.

ETHNOGRAPHY

The present project area is located within territory that was occupied by the Nisenan Native American peoples who are also referred to as “Southern Maidu” (Wilson and Towne, 1978). These Penutian-speaking peoples occupied the drainages of the southern Feather River and Honcut Creek in the north, through Bear River and the Yuba and American River drainages in the south. Villages were frequently located on flats adjoining streams, and were inhabited mainly in the winter as it was usually necessary to go out into the hills and higher elevation zones to establish temporary camps during food gathering seasons (i.e., spring, summer, and fall).

As with all northern California Indian groups, economic life for the Nisenan revolved around hunting, fishing and the collecting of plant foods. The Nisenan were very sophisticated in terms of their knowledge of the uses of local animals and plants, and of the availability of raw material sources that could be used in manufacturing an immense array of primary and secondary tools and implements. Unfortunately, only fragmentary evidence of the material culture of these people remains, due in part to perishability, and in part to the impacts to archaeological sites resulting from later (historic) land uses.

Based on the results of previous survey work within the general and immediate project area, the expected range of prehistoric site types include the following:

- Surface scatters of lithic artifacts and debitage associated with midden accumulations and other surface features (i.e., circular housepit depressions, mortar holes) resulting from protracted occupation along the margins of stream channels, particularly where such channels merge with one another. The confluence of an ephemeral stream course with a tributary of Pleasant Grove Creek is located near the south end of the proposed Sunset-Athens Avenue connector road.
- Surface scatters of lithic artifacts and debitage without midden accumulations, resulting from short-term occupation and/or specialized economic activities.
- Bedrock milling stations, including mortar holes and metate slicks, in areas where suitable bedrock outcrops are present.
- Petroglyphs.
- Isolated finds of aboriginal artifacts and flakes.

It is not expected that all of these site types will be encountered within the project area, but rather that these are the most likely types to be encountered based upon background information and the results of previous survey work in the area.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Recorded history in the project area begins with the attempts of Spanish colonists to explore parts of California beyond the coastal zone. Gabriel Moraga’s expedition was undertaken in 1806, with additional incursions occurring through the 1840s. European Americans began arriving in the mid-1820s, most

notably with the trapping party of Jedediah Smith. However, the European Caucasian incursion with the greatest impact on Native American population and culture occurred immediately following the discovery of gold at Coloma in 1848, which initiated the Gold Rush of 1849.

Mining along virtually every stream within this part of California was underway by 1850, including Auburn Ravine, which is located a short distance to the north of the project area. Placer mining continued to yield large quantities of gold through the next several years, and by 1855 supporting industry included stores, transportation companies, saloons, toll roads and stage lines, foundries, lumber mills, and water companies.

The period immediately following the Gold Rush saw numerous homesteads claimed and ranches created. One of the most important in the immediate area was the consolidated ranch of Joel Parker Whitney, who formed what was known as the Spring Valley Ranch, located immediately east and southeast of the project area. Ranching and farming continued in this area until about 20 years ago, at which time many of the large historic land holdings began to be subdivided in conjunction with intensive residential and commercial development. Collectively, these historic activities have cumulatively and adversely impacted many of the prehistoric sites in this region.

REGULATIONS, PLANS, AND POLICIES

The proposed project constitutes an “undertaking” which could adversely affect various types of resources located within the project’s Study Area. Since the project involves federal review by the US Army Corps of Engineers for the Nationwide Permit (General Condition 12), the project must conform with federal guidelines for assessing effects to cultural resources. These guidelines include Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800), Section 2(b) of Executive Order 11593, Section 101(b)(4) of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, and other rules and regulations.

Placer County General Plan

The Placer County General Plan’s goal for cultural resources is, “*To identify, protect, and enhance Placer County’s important historical, archaeological, paleontological, and cultural sites and their contributing environment.*” The policies encourage support from the public, coordination with local Native American communities, require developers to identify cultural resource sites and avoid or mitigate impacts, and encourage preservation and registration of any cultural resource sites or historical landmarks.

Sunset Industrial Area Plan

The Sunset Industrial Area Plan contains the goal to identify and protect significant cultural, paleontological, archaeological, and historical resources in the area. The policies support pro-active review and consultation with the Native American community in cases where development may result in a disturbance or impact, and mitigation when cultural resources are discovered.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The following two cultural resources assessments of the Study Area were performed for this project:

- Cultural Resources Assessment of the Sunset-Athens Connector, Placer County, California. 2003. Project 2002-149. Ecorp Consulting, Inc., Roseville, California.
- Archaeological Inventory Survey, Auburn Rancheria Gaming Project's Proposed Access Road and Sewer Line Construction Project, near Lincoln, Placer County, California. 2000. Jensen and Associates, Inc., Durham, California.

Research Approach

Compliance with Section 106 of the NHPA requires completion of projects in conformity with the standards, guidelines, and principles in the *Advisory Council's Treatment of Archaeological Properties: A Handbook* (1980), and *Archaeology and Historic Preservation: Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines* (1983). Based on these guidelines, the following specific tasks were performed:

- Conduct a records search at the North Central Information Center at CSUS to determine if any previously recorded sites exist within the project area. The goals of the records search are to determine (a) the extent and distribution of previous archaeological surveys, (b) the locations of known archaeological sites and any previously recorded archaeological districts, and (c) the relationships between known sites and environmental variables. This step is designed to ensure that, during subsequent field survey work, all significant cultural resources are discovered, correctly identified, fully documented, and properly interpreted.
- Conduct a pedestrian survey of the Study Area in order to record and evaluate any previously unidentified cultural resources. Based on map review, a complete coverage, variable-intensity survey was considered appropriate, given the presence of variable archaeological sensitivity zones within the project area. The purpose of the pedestrian survey is to ensure that any previously recorded sites which may have been identified during the records search are re-located and evaluated in relation to the present project.
- Identify project effects and recommends appropriate mitigation measures for sites which might be affected by the undertaking and which are considered significant resources, and/or eligible or potentially eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Record Searches

The information evaluated prior to conducting field work included data maintained by the North Central Information Center of the California Historical Resources Information System (California State University at Sacramento), input from Auburn Rancheria Nisenan representatives, and available published and unpublished documents relevant to regional prehistory, ethnography, and early historic developments.

In addition to examining the official records of Placer County as maintained by the North Central Information Center at CSUS, the following additional sources were evaluated:

1. The National Register of Historic Places (1979, 1989, Supplements to 12/99);
2. The California Inventory of Historic Resources (State of California 1976);
3. The California Historical Landmarks (State of California 1990);
4. The United Auburn Indian Community, representing Nisenan;
5. Existing published and unpublished documents relevant to prehistory, ethnography, and early historic developments in the vicinity. These sources provided a general environmental and cultural context by means of which to assess likely site types and distribution patterns for the project area, and are summarized below.

Paleontological resources, such as fossils, provide scientific data for studying the pre-modern era. Placer County maintains a countywide cultural database, under the responsibility of the Placer County Department of Museums.

Native American Consultation

UAIC was contacted and requested to provide any information that they might have concerning cultural sites in the area. UAIC did not have any specific information concerning habitation or burials sites, or areas of traditional collecting, within or immediately adjacent to the project area. Based on review of the cultural resources assessments for the Study Area and the mitigation measures for the Proposed Project, UAIC expressed no concerns regarding impacts to cultural resources.

FIELD SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Fieldwork for the proposed project was conducted during three studies. The first was on September 29, 1998, and on November 7, 9, and 28, 2000, by archaeologist Sean M. Jensen, M.A. (Jensen and Associates, 1998, 2000). The second study was performed on December 30, 2002, by Michael Oberndorf (Ecorp Consulting, Inc., 2003). The third study was performed on April 9, 2004 by Julia Green (Ecorp Consulting Inc., 2004) to verify the 100-foot corridor had been surveyed over the entire area of potential effect (APE) and also verify site CA-PLA-1086H is outside of the project APE. The pedestrian surveys were performed by walking three transects along a 100-foot wide corridor. A 100-foot area was surveyed to insure a thorough study, even though the APE is 88 feet wide. The APE measures 88

feet wide with a linear distance of approximately 18,020 feet (3.41 miles). Transect spacing was maintained at no more than 10 meters. In searching for cultural resources, the surveyors took into account the results of background research, in particular the locations for previously documented historic and prehistoric sites, and were alert for any unusual contours, soil changes, distinctive vegetation patterns, exotic materials, artifacts, feature or feature remnants and other possible markers of cultural sites.

PREHISTORIC RESOURCES

No evidence of prehistoric activity was observed within the APE. While most of the property has been subjected to historic/contemporary cattle ranching and other activities (including placement of utilities and grading of access roads), the impacts of these activities were not so severe that they would have completely obscured all evidence of prehistoric or early historic use. No prehistoric sites were identified during records searches within the APE.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

No evidence of historic-era occupation or utilization was observed within the APE for the access road during the field surveys. The immediate area was suitable for grazing, but homesteads and other built ranch features were widely scattered throughout this region, with no evidence of such features being observed within the proposed access road corridor. Based on the record searches, evidence of historic period activities was reported at three locations outside of the APE: site P-31-17-H consisting of a series of rock alignments; site P-31-22-H consisting of a dry-laid rock wall; and CA-PLA-1086H consisting of surface scatter of 19th Century cultural refuse and a water well associated with a small surface scatter of ceramic and glass fragments. These sites lie outside of the project's APE. Additionally an isolate (Sunset Athens Isolate #1) was recorded consisting of a water well with a pump and pipe.

4.10.2 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Cultural resource preservation and criteria for the identification of important resources focus on a cultural property's research potential, uniqueness and integrity (relative to other cultural resources similar in kind). A resource is considered to have integrity when it retains sufficient physical character to convey to the viewer an association with prehistoric or historic patterns, persons, designs, or technologies. A significant property must have the potential to contribute important information towards scholarly research, which can then be conveyed to the general public.

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. In this area of California, archaeological findings are

often associated with Native American habitation, such as food processing sites, village sites and encampments, and burial grounds.

An important archaeological resource is one that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage;
- Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;
- Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or
- Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Comments received on the Notice of Preparation pertaining to cultural concerns are addressed in the section below. Appendix A includes the Notice of Preparation and comment letters received as a result.

Impact

4.10.1 Existing historic or prehistoric archaeological or paleontological resources could potentially be impacted by project-related construction, especially earth-moving activities. No historic or prehistoric archaeological or paleontological resources were found within the APE during the records search or the field survey, however one resource is nearby. This is a significant impact.

No historic or prehistoric archaeological or paleontological resources were found during the records search or the field survey in the project's area of potential effect. However, three previously recorded historic resources (CA-PLA-1086H, P-31-17-H, and P-31-22-H) have been identified in the close proximity to the project's APE. Implementation of the proposed road improvements are not anticipated to affect prehistoric or historic sites considered eligible or potentially eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. A letter from the Office of Historic Preservation (Dr. Knox Mellon, State Historic Preservation Officer, June 2nd 2003, **Appendix J**), supports this conclusion that historic properties will not be affected. The letter of concurrence stated that the Study Area was adequately delineated for cultural resources, adequate efforts were made to involve interested parties, including Native Americans, no reported features eligible for National Register were present within the area of potential effect.

Mitigation Measure

4.10.1 Construction fencing shall be placed around Locus B of site CA-PLA-1086H as a precautionary measure, given its close proximity to the area of potential effects.

Impact

4.10.2 Previously undiscovered historic or prehistoric archaeological or paleontological resources could be encountered during project-related construction, especially earth-moving activities. This would be a significant impact.

Based on the negative results found during both the records search and the field survey, implementation of the proposed road improvements are not anticipated to affect prehistoric or historic sites considered eligible or potentially eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Mitigation Measure

4.10.2 The following requirements will be included in construction contract specifications for construction activities associated with the proposed project:

“In the event that any prehistoric, historic, or paleontological resources are discovered during construction-related earth-moving activities, all work within 50 feet of the resources shall be halted and a qualified archaeologist or paleontologist shall be consulted to assess the significance of the find. If any find is determined to be significant by the qualified archaeologist, then appropriate agency and project representatives and the qualified archaeologist and/or paleontologist will meet to determine the appropriate course for action. The United Auburn Indian Community and any other pertinent tribes will be notified upon discovery of any native American cultural resources. All significant cultural materials recovered shall be subject to scientific analysis, professional museum curation, and a report prepared by the qualified archaeologist according to current professional standards.”

“If human bone or bone of unknown origin is found during construction, all work shall stop in the vicinity of the find and the Placer County Coroner shall be contacted immediately. If the remains are determined to be Native American, the coroner shall notify the Native American Heritage Commission who shall notify the person it believes to be the most likely descendant. The most likely descendant shall work with the contractor to develop a program for reinterment of the human remains and any associated artifacts. No additional work is to take place within the immediate vicinity of the find until the identified appropriate actions have been implemented.”

Significance After Mitigation

Less than significant.